

EVALUATION OF PARASITE ANTIGENS IN ELISA FOR THE DETECTION OF *TOXOPLASMA* INFECTION IN PIGS.

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One-third of the human world population is infected with the protozoan parasite *Toxoplasma gondii*. Toxoplasmosis is an old disease but is still very underreported and neglected disease. There doesn't exist human vaccines although the disease burden is similar to those of *Salmonella* and *Campylobacter*. These high disease burden in combination with disappointing results of the currently available treatment options have led to focus on more effective prevention. *Toxoplasma* has always been linked to the consumption of raw or undercooked meat, in particular of pigs and sheep. However, the prevalence of *T. gondii* in meat-producing animals has decreased considerably over the past 20 years in areas with intensive farm management. Recently, the Biological Hazard Panel of the European Food Safety Authority has recommended the initiation of monitoring programmes in the pre-harvest sector on sheep, goats, pigs and game. Until now, toxoplasmosis is not monitored at slaughter, the need for a decent veterinarian diagnostic technique applicable in the field is growing. With the development of such a technique, applicable in the field, there is a possibility to discriminate between infected and non-infected meat and to treat the infected meat before consumption. Farms at risk can be identified and the food safety improved. The aim of the present study is the development of diagnostic techniques for pigs applicable in laboratories and slaughter houses.